

# ARTGAZE

winter 2009      townsville's arts magazine





## note from the editor

I would first like to welcome Amy Logovik to the *Art Gaze* team, who has been the driving force behind the redesign work in this issue.

With a focus on interviews, this issue gets close and personal with a variety of artists discussing their motivations, experiences and goals, offering some insight into their work.

Keep an eye out for the Spring issue of *Art Gaze*, as the magazine is currently undertaking an expansion of focus. Without giving too much away, I will just say that it will no longer be only visual art focused, but will incorporate a variety of arts in Townsville.

*Art Gaze* would also like to thank all of its regular volunteers and its growing list of subscribers and readers.

## contributors

### editor

Jak Henson

### proofreader

Carolyn Pike

### writers

Alison McDonald

Bernadette Ashley

Eric Nash

Jak Henson

Pia Armitage

Ross Searle

Vicki Salisbury

### printed by

Lotsa Printing  
Townsville

### design & layout

Amy Logovik  
[www.amylogovik.com.au](http://www.amylogovik.com.au)

**amy  
logovik**  
graphic design



*Art Gaze* gratefully acknowledges sponsorship from  
Boulton Cleary & Kern Lawyers.

**ARTGAZE**  
townsville's arts magazine

### for all inquiries

Jak Henson  
0400 297 301

[jak@artgaze.com.au](mailto:jak@artgaze.com.au)  
[www.artgaze.com.au](http://www.artgaze.com.au)  
PO Box 50  
Townsville Q 4810

Front cover: Sasi Victoire  
Detail of *Legend in a lunchbox series*, 2008  
*Mixed media assemblage in plastic lunchboxes*  
Courtesy of Umbrella Studio

The editor takes no responsibility for the authority of articles included.  
The information published, although believed to be accurate, is not guaranteed.  
The opinions expressed may not be the opinions of the editor. © No part of this  
publication is to be reused without permission. But please read it and pass it on.



# contents

- 04** travel diaries of an artist  
with anneke silver
- 06** 'hit the bottle'  
conservation project newcastle region art gallery  
alison mcdonald and jane gillings
- 08** interview with dr laurens tan  
about his work *bablogic* and *vernacular terrain 2*
- 10** crossings  
an installation of sculpture and multimedia work inspired by the  
ross river in townsville
- 12** Q150  
now and then: 150 years of art making in north queensland
- 14** umbrella unfurls its past  
umbrella studio association has been a wonderful vehicle to  
expand our minds and enrich our lives in so many ways
- REVIEWS**
- 16** metal as anything  
how does an exhibition 'sum up' an artist's thirty year  
career?
- 17** on the edge  
visions of a tropical coastline is a group exhibition showcasing  
artworks from 12 exceptional artists who live and work in far north  
queensland

**FREE**  
**Subscription**

to ArtGaze Magazine  
[www.artgaze.com.au](http://www.artgaze.com.au)





Anneke Silver, *White Horse*, Pastel on paper, Courtesy of the artist

## travel diaries of an artist with anneke silver

BY JAK HENSON

**Meeting Anneke for afternoon tea in her studio was not only inspirational for my own art practice, but an inspiration for life. While I intended to discuss her extensive travel plans for 2009, including exhibition and workshop schedules, I found our conversation digressing to the layered architecture of Amsterdam and road trips through the south of France, discussing our travelling adventures and sharing experiences rather than focusing on the formality of schedules and exhibitions. Our stories, I realised, shared our excitement of life and had, or would, become the foundation of many artworks.**

We talked about her experiences in France that led to her artist residency one year later. Spending time with a small group of artists and musicians in a studio in France, Anneke adored the history, architecture and secret gardens, as well as the good company and the making of live music. (What's not to love?, I thought.) So the logical question was: 'There's not somewhere to do a residency here, is there?' The reply from another artist was perfect: 'I know people, and I'll arrange it!'

Back in Townsville a few months later, she received an email from France: 'I believe you would like to have the studio here...' (or

something of a similar nature). So the following year Anneke was back in France, drawing and painting based on her passion for the architecture and the landscape.

A detail that should not be left out of such a simple story is her drive to the studio where she would reside. (The more I talked with Anneke the more I realised that her experiences would not be as memorable without her friends and the people she meets along the way.) Her residency trip began outside of France at the home of a friend in Holland, a writer. As her friend had no special commitments other than working on the final chapters of her book, it seemed logical that Anneke asked her to come to France too and write there. And so the two of them headed out by car on the long road to the south of France.

While Anneke had an address of the studio, none of the houses in the tiny hill top village were marked and finding the correct building appeared to be more difficult than expected. Spotting the most gorgeous house of all, Anneke hopped out of the car to take a closer view. Hoping that this might be where they were to reside, she told herself that it couldn't possibly be their studio. Walking through the ancient courtyard filled with lavender and roses she noticed the open front door. She called out to see if anyone was around. There was no answer, but on the table by the door there was a note. It read 'Welcome Anneke. There is milk in the fridge'.

I reached for another Tim Tam and more tea and realised that I had not yet asked Anneke anything about her plans for 2009, including why she was about to drive to Hill End, an old gold mining town in New South Wales. Anneke explained that she had a residency there in 2006, in





Far above: Anneke Silver, *Front Room*, Pastel on paper, Courtesy of the artist

Above: Anneke Silver working in a studio in France, Courtesy of the artist

Donald Friend's old cottage. While there, it was suggested to her by another artist that she see Ilford House: 'I know you'll love it!' And she did. It was a grand old sandstone farmhouse, not far from Hill End. It had been an artists' retreat for many decades, and evidence of Brett Whiteley's visits, and that of other prominent Sydney artists—one of whom painted on the corridor walls—is everywhere. Matt Carroll (director of *Storm Boy*) spent some of his life in the house and his mother, Sheila Carroll, a textile artist, still lives there. Other farmhouses in the area had been renovated to different degrees, but this one was untouched. Sheila said 'I like it how it is, I don't want it done up!' Sheila's colourful weavings were everywhere, interacting with the texture of the sandstone, heavy timbers and antique furniture, but most important were the memories held within its walls. All this became the inspiration for Anneke to return and do a series of drawings of the interior of Sheila's house.

Anneke's exhibition, titled *Drawings of Ilford House*, opened on 7 March 2009 in nearby Rylstone. And as Anneke wrote, the invitation states that 'the artist will be present' so 'the artist hopped in the car with the art works and decided to make it an extended grand trip'.

The road trip took her from Townsville, along the Queensland coast via Proserpine, Noosa and Brisbane, along the beaches of northern New South Wales, to Sydney where her birthday was celebrated with her sons and their families; crossing the Blue Mountains to inland New South Wales for the opening and returning to Townsville via the inland road through Roma and Springsure, giving a couple of workshops on the way for Flying Arts, after spending a night in the Carnarvon Gorge. While Anneke's recollection included many more places with beautiful

Australian scenery, it was clear that the highlights of her trip included spending time with friends and family, visiting many studios, looking at and discussing work and 'having that lovely sensation of being on the same wavelength as other artists.'

In regards to her exhibition opening, Anneke wrote that 'the show was a success with almost all the work sold; not that I measure success necessarily in those terms'

Anneke's travel plans for 2009, which was the original plan for this article, include being in Ingham and Hervey Bay in June, Venice and Holland in July, then to France, Holland and back to Bathurst in November. The travelling in itself sounds exciting, but the journeys cannot be wholly appreciated without the detail and passion that is expressed by Anneke herself, giving the story life. To write about Anneke's travels in 2009, I will have to wait until she returns to Townsville. ♦



**'hit the bottle'  
conservation project  
newcastle region art gallery  
alison mcdonald  
and jane gillings  
17–20 april 2009**

BY ALISON MCDONALD

**Recently, I was fortunate to be part of an exciting conservation collaboration between ABC Newcastle, Hunter Water and Newcastle Region Art Gallery titled 'Hit the bottle'. Initiated by the ABC Newcastle breakfast team, radio listeners received one metal refillable water bottle for every five plastic bottles they brought to the ABC's Newcastle studios.**

The bottles were then taken to the Newcastle Region Art Gallery and stored for when the two artists, Sydney-based Jane Gillings and myself, Alison McDonald, Townsville-based, were to come and make our installation—in just four days. Gillings specialises in small-scale recycled plastic, and I also work with recycled materials, including larger scaled public (e.g. Strand Ephemera) works of plastic PET bottles.

Once we knew our proposal was accepted, we planned the basic elements of the installation. Just two weeks prior to beginning we heard from Angela Scrymgour (ABC Marketing Manager) that they had collected over 3000 bottles for us to work with. Although I have a love–hate relationship with plastics, to me this was extremely exciting as it was like a utopia of unlimited media.

We decided to give our installation a reef theme for a few reasons. First for relevance: many of the bottles consumed end up not only in landfill (where they may leach into the oceans), many also end up directly in the sea. They may turn up in some marine creatures gut, where it dies a slow and painful death, or in the marine food chain when broken down, or in the Northern Pacific Gyre (a vortex of plastic debris, which is twice the size of the American continent, known as Pacific plastic soup).

We were situated out the back of the Newcastle Region Art Gallery where they hold many of their workshops. Lisa Slade, who curated the exhibition, also slaved along with us there and looked after our every need.

Upon starting we were confronted by what seemed like endless bags of plastic water bottles. One could hardly imagine the variety of water bottles on the market. First, we sorted the bottles into their various groups, colours and sizes, and then removed the labels. As planned, I began making a coral bommie with the tops and bottoms of bottles, to base our other works upon, and Jane started on exquisite smaller pieces. We were very fortunate to have the help of some wonderful



volunteers. All were appreciated. Bree Ashley, a third-year sculpture student from Newcastle TAFE, laboured along with us the entire four days. We were also fortunate to have been donated very comfortable accommodation with the Quest Newcastle, where we nursed all our cuts, blisters and other injuries each night.

During the entire time at the gallery we were interviewed repeatedly for radio, the local television and the *Newcastle Herald*. Getting a radio station to initiate an idea certainly instigates enormous media interest like we had never experienced before!

There were hundreds of people coming through each day to see what we were doing with the bottles they had brought in. In conjunction with our mini residency, the gallery had organised Artcart. Artcart is a very successful activity that is held every weekend, where children bring a parent and create something with the parent's assistance. This enables younger children to spend a bit of special time with one of their parents and also teaches the parent how easy and fun art can be. The children made fabulous individual jellyfish from the bottoms of bottles by punching holes in the tops and threading brightly coloured wools, feathers etc. for the tentacles. In just over four days we transformed the bottles into coral bommies atop plinths with a myriad of different coloured corals. A net was draped from the space above, where we hung much of the blue-green seaweed, multi-coloured fish, spectacular plant-like columns, blue squids, jelly fish and other floating seaweeds and creatures. Finally, at midday on Monday after self-imposed 12 (or longer) hour days, construction ceased and installation began.

The title of our installation is *Watermark*, with the aim to draw our attention to the mark we leave on the planet and ask us to re-think our habits of water consumption.

My hope would be to repeat this successful and worthy project here in Townsville and wherever else possible. Each year Australians, who have unlimited access to clean and safe drinking water, unnecessarily buy more than 300 million bottles of water. Additionally, many of our small country towns west of Townsville and Newcastle do not recycle at all, as it is too expensive for the councils to do so and the plastic is dumped, ending up as landfill accumulating year after year.

The exhibition remains at Newcastle Region Art Gallery for several weeks and then travels to the foyer of the Hunter Water Corporation. Finally, the works will be auctioned off and the proceeds will be donated to an ocean/water cleaning project. More on the project can be seen at [www.abcnwcastle.net.au](http://www.abcnwcastle.net.au) ❖

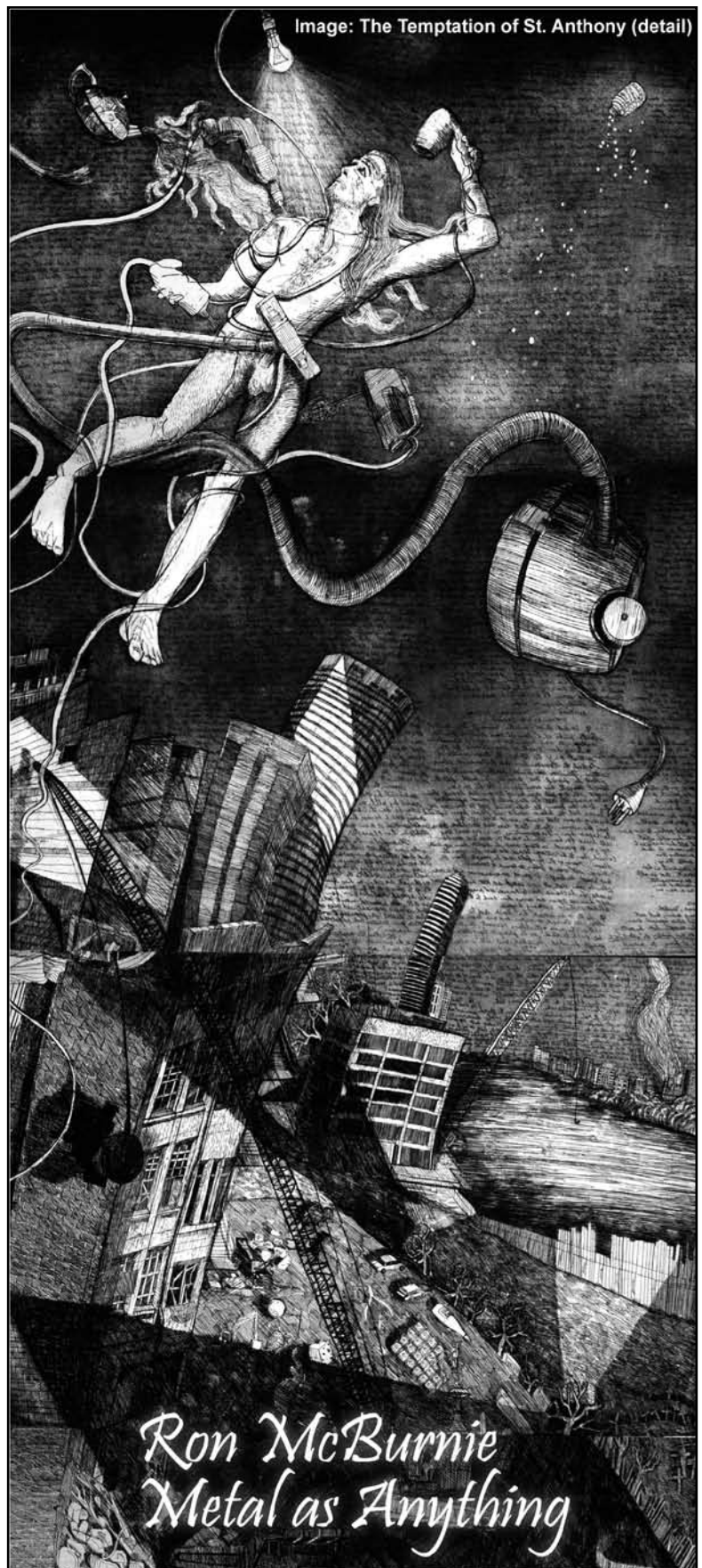


Image: The Temptation of St. Anthony (detail)

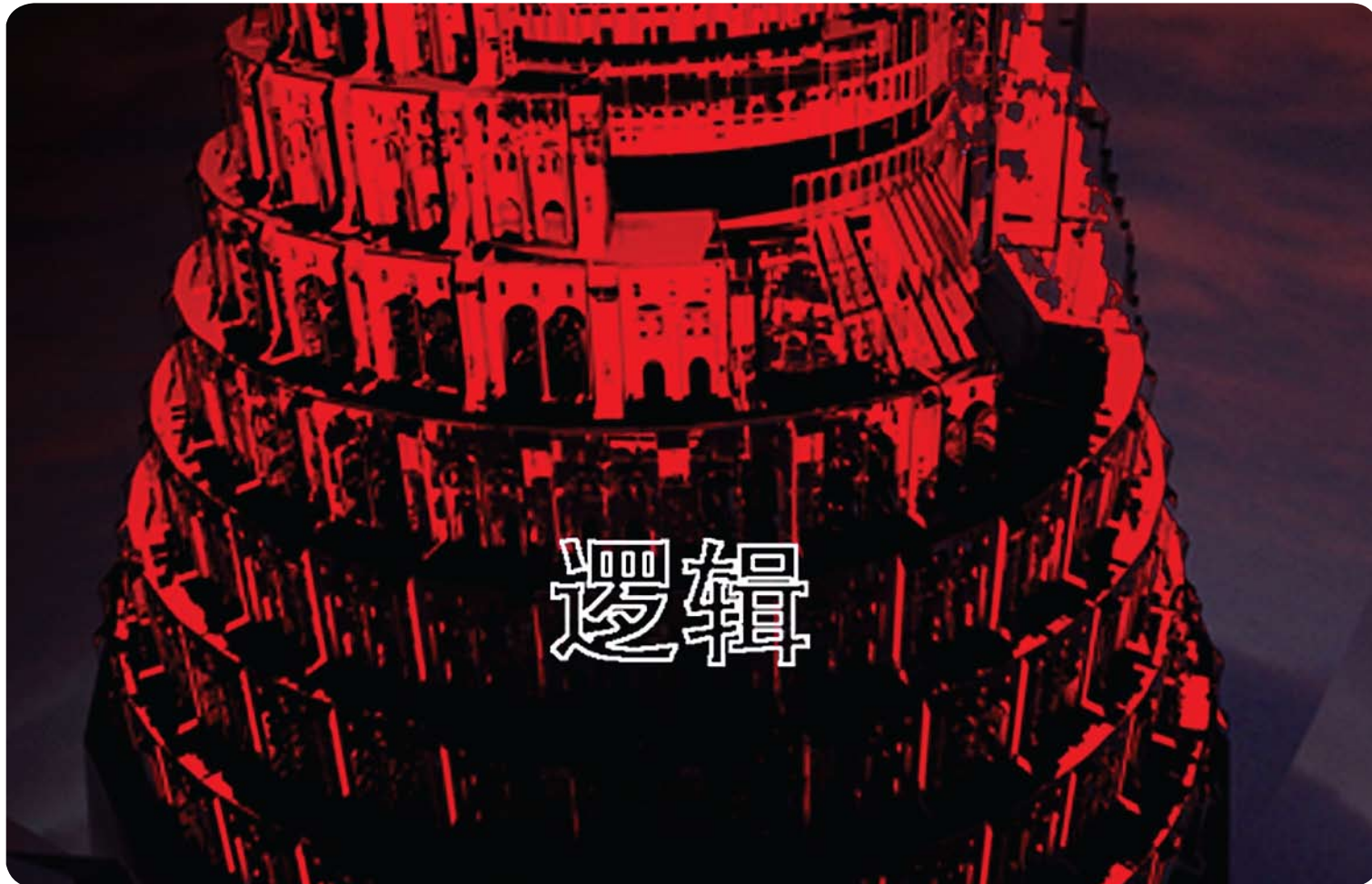
Ron McBurnie  
Metal as Anything

PERC TUCKER REGIONAL GALLERY  
26 JUNE UNTIL 16 AUGUST 2009

Cnr. Denham St. & Flinders Mall  
[www.townsville.qld.gov.au/recreation/gallery/perctucker](http://www.townsville.qld.gov.au/recreation/gallery/perctucker)  
PO Box 1268, Townsville, 4810  
P. (07) 4727 9011  
E. [ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au](mailto:ptrg@townsville.qld.gov.au)  
F. (07) 4772 3656







Laurens Tan, *BabaLogic*, 2008, Video Still, Courtesy of Pinnacles Gallery

## interview with dr laurens tan about his work babalogic and vernacular terrain 2

BY PIA ARMITAGE

1. Your background and upbringing has involved a lot of travelling and living in different countries. Do you have a place that you call home?

My 'true' home and 'anchor' for almost 17 years is on the NSW south coast. Over the years I've had 'satellite' homes in other cities and countries. My apartment in Beijing is like a satellite station to me. I have just moved to an apartment across the courtyard in the same complex in Jiuxianqiao NanLu, so the neighbourhood is part of a familiarity that one would include as being part of home. Longing and belonging are things that occupy my mind when thinking of home. I used to think that home is the place you miss. But I miss other places when I'm home. The experience and sentiment of longing values being away as much as being 'home'. I sometimes envy the Chinese people. They seem to be a people comfortable at home. From their definition of home I'm a foreigner wherever I go, probably like most of us in Australia.

2. Has your art practice always involved working with new media? Does new media give you a freedom that other mediums don't?

I made an early commitment in ceramics and painting for their tactile qualities. Then I began drawing or making constructions in the days of floppy and the Mac SE using MacDraw. Since 1994 I used 3D programs to design objects and architectural models for animation. Along with writing, Strata Studio is still one of my main thinking tools. I still scribble

my ideas on paper, 3D offers a similar flexibility with an additional element of being able to create and invent in a geometrical space. I still work with charcoal drawings, and have an urge to paint and work in clay again, now that I have completed the circle that links concept with production. I also want to create more animation as movies.

3. What themes or concepts have you been addressing in your recent work?

Things seem to be constantly in flux—sometimes it tends to be less about the medium, as concepts take on their own life. But there are things on the drawing board which are industrial designs that link sculptural form with furniture design. Adjusting to life in China necessitates confronting language. Since arriving in 2006, the parallax between English and Chinese has been a source of great contemplation. It's as though I've discovered for myself the polarities of human thought and communication—and there's an endless depth of possibilities, simply by placing oneself on different parts of the 'bridge'.

4. Can you tell us a little bit about your work *Babalogic* that is in *Vernacular Terrain 2*? How did you go about making it?

I've found the analyses of *hanyu*, and how it represents ideas most compelling. Its structure and elusiveness is a basis for my recent sculpture, 3D constructions, industrial design, photomedia and screen works. My studies in Chinese conversation are constantly interrupted by an inquisitive and interrogative nature—I'm never able to accept meanings and contexts at face value, and I use every opportunity to use language to unlock customs and values, otherwise obscured from view. It offers a close and constructive observation of Beijing's cultural urban dilemmas that started with the *Beng Beng* series and continues with *Babalogic*, the predicament of globalism and identity. For me, language provides the interface to analyse social, cultural and ethical



differences. My current concern is to define my own Chinese-ness—an innate sense that I believe is resistant to change and cultural evolution. Making of the *Babalagic* sculptural elements is almost entirely through the use of CAD. It's the same method used by architects and industrial designers. The videos are simple animated images and sequences from 3D rendered models.

5. *Vernacular Terrain 2* has toured in other places in Australia. What feedback have you received from audiences about your work?

The feedback's been great. I think the overall impression is that, as a curated exhibition, *VT2* is open-minded and adventurous in the selection of works. Many of the works are by artists who have a unique way of using screenworks as art.

6. Pinnacles Gallery is very privileged to have you open *Vernacular Terrain 2* and to host an artists talk. How significant is it for you to visit Townsville and be involved in the show here?

I haven't been to many important cities and locations in Australia and Townsville is a place I've always been curious about. I have much to learn about Australia as a cultural melting pot outside of the capitals. I hope an interesting exchange results from my visit.

7. Do you have regular galleries that you exhibit your work in? Where can audiences expect to see future works?

I'm working with several galleries in Beijing—PKM (Korean), BB Gallery and Imagine, and with the Teapot Gallery in Cologne, Lillian Heidenberg in New York. I hope to resolve a new gallery relationship in Australia soon.

8. Will there be a *Vernacular Terrain 3* and would you like to be involved?

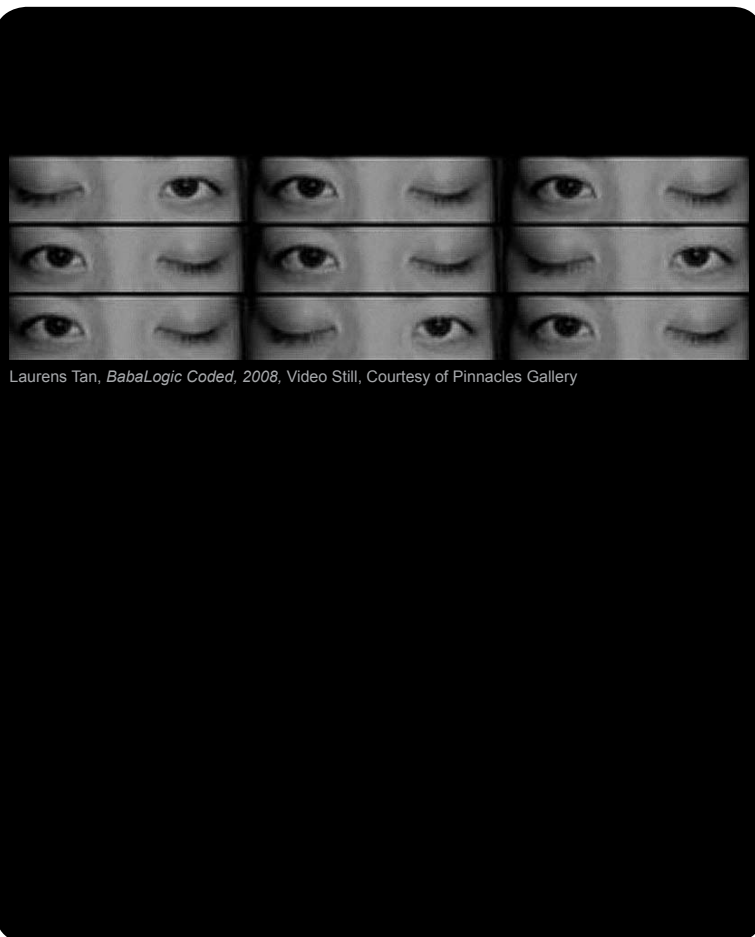
*VT* is a survey of the progressions in screen and digital works as well as a curated selection of artists. I'm always happy if my work is considered in such a light.

9. A lot of the works in *Vernacular Terrain 2* are very abstract and raw. What advice would you give to visitors in how to interpret/enjoy some of the works on show?

The best way to consider the works is as a series of explorations in the creative use of language and technology. Some works require closer investigation and some require some appreciation of the way technology is used in communication or in reading images.

10. What would you like audiences to take away from your work?

Many of my works are like puzzles and visual solutions. I'd be happy for an audience to find the work productively engaging and entertaining. ♦



Laurens Tan, *BabaLogic Coded*, 2008, Video Still, Courtesy of Pinnacles Gallery

.....

A poster for 'Artspace' featuring a large, stylized white 'A' on a black background. The word 'Artspace' is written in a white, handwritten-style font. Below it, the text 'an artist run initiative' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The poster also includes information about presenting local and visiting contemporary visual arts and art events, and provides details about their new home at Dancenorth.

**Artspace**  
an artist run initiative

**Presenting local and visiting  
contemporary visual arts  
and art events**

Visit us at our new home  
**Dancenorth > Cnr Stanley & Walker St**

Proudly Supported by **DANCENORTH** Home to Artspace Inc

**Artspace Inc at Dancenorth**  
Location > Cnr Stanley & Walker St Townsville  
Gallery Hours > Wed - Sat 10am to 2pm or by appointment  
Contacts > Jeanette 0416 980 323 Shane 0401 099 094



Vince Bray with his work, *The journey along the river*, 2009, Acrylic on Silk, Photographed by Kate Glover

## crossings

9 may 2009 to 14 june 2009

BY PIA ARMITAGE

**Crossings is the current exhibition at Pinnacles Gallery. It is an installation of sculpture and multimedia work inspired by the Ross River in Townsville. The exhibition is a collaboration between local artists Vince Bray, Marion Gaemers, Candice Miles, Trish Nixon-Smith and Alan Valentine. Their works celebrate the growth and change of the city and its surrounds. The artists combine differing and comparable perspectives to create a greater consciousness of the river and water as a vital part of the city's existence. Lighting, digital imagery, film, sound and movement have allowed the artists to convey their intentions and push their own creative boundaries.**

The following interview was with the group about the show and their works.

How and why did the group decide to work together on this project?

The 'group' are all local artists who have worked with various concepts, in particular, nature-inspired subject matter. Having known each other for many years, working on art projects together in various degrees and combinations, we were motivated to produce an exhibition on something that is important to us all—the Ross River.

Why the Ross River?

A town cannot survive without a water supply. For Townsville it is the Ross River—the reason the town was established. Townsville is

now a city and the river has been the mainstay that has allowed the changes and growth to happen. Yet rivers are 'just there' for most of the community, only prominent in the mind and eye when they have either not enough or too much water. For many within the community, the river will be crossed each day, sometimes many times, with little or no notice.

A river is a crossing in itself. It meanders and winds its way through the land as it travels to the sea, cutting areas from each other. Bridges join and connect, weirs and dams control water supplies and separate fresh and tidal flow. They are boundaries and connections and therefore, avenues of communication. Rivers are entities in their own right but made more significant through the connection they have with people and place. Rivers are places that unite all that live within and this exhibition is a means to bring to mind how central and essential this river is.

What did the group want to say about the Ross River?

The Ross River is an ecosystem bringing much benefit, pleasure and occupation, often neglected with debris of all sorts allowed to collect along and in it. We, as artists, have all at various times photographed, sketched, painted, contemplated, looked at, appreciated, driven along, crossed, walked, biked, swam, paddled, rowed, explored or sat by our river—the Ross. Trish and Vince have spent the last 5 years observing and recording through drawings and photos the changes the river has undergone, which instigated this project. Although we have perhaps been a little more aware of aspects of the river than most, we also know that we too have little real acquaintance with the river as a whole, as we habitually only concentrate on a narrow area at one time. What does the river actually look like? What is its shape, its uses, its minutiae? We may not be able to answer fully even these few questions in one exhibition, yet it is an opportunity to combine our observances, our individual experiences and our skills.



### What kind of work is in the exhibition?

The works draw on the diverse responses of the individual artist towards the central subject through varied descriptive media—from the river's outline winding its way along gallery floor to vibrantly painted works on flowing silk conveying the moods of the river, to the multiple sculpturally woven forms of large bats that roost at the mouth of the river. From simplistic shapes to skillfully crafted forms of boats that use the river. From the photographic journey down the river to the projected moving imagery of river happenings, to the printed and etched transparencies depicting river forms and structures, where river-water patterns and movements become evident and expressive of the movement of time, space, place and form. Sculptural, painterly works are interwoven with digital media and installation works communicating some of the many countenances of the river and its interpretations through the readings of the five artists.

### Why did the group choose Pinnacles Gallery?

Our choice is because Pinnacles Gallery is well positioned along the river—it is located there because of the river and its ambience. What better space could we have to show our work about this river? The Gallery brackets and articulates the river itself and will allow the viewer to walk from the exhibited works and physically confront the subject of our contemplation.

### How has multimedia been used and allowed the group to express their ideas?

Multimedia is not necessarily needed to express aspects of the river but of course it is used to bring a multiplicity of communications. The

visible, acoustic, movement and tactile characteristics of a place can use many methods of expression to bring enhanced acuity. Lighting, digital imagery, printing techniques combined with river sounds and a linear narrative of river movement all complement the creative, visual and tangible forms of this show. As artists, we use what will best convey our intentions—it is concept that dictates the media used, whether traditional or contemporary media, which will often be multimedia in content.

### How is the group hoping the public will respond to the exhibition?

We would like the audience to appreciate our individual work, yet, perhaps the main reason for artists to present their reflections in the public arena is to stimulate purposeful responses to the subject matter, which might evoke an awareness of the complexity and richness of this 'thing', our river. By combining our different and comparable perspectives, a greater consciousness of the Ross River, as vital to our existence and placement, can be suggested.

*Crossings* can be seen at Pinnacles Gallery until 14 June  
20 Village Boulevard  
Riverway Arts Centre  
Townsville 4817 ❖



**The Blue Art Shop**  
*Supply quality products and services to the arts community*

We stock books in all genres and techniques. Winsor & Newton water colours. Exotic and specialty papers, Arches, Art Spectrum and Canson. Atelier, Faber Castell and much much more! If it's not in our stock we can order it for you.

**ADULT ART CLASSES**  
Oil, Acrylic, Water Colour and Drawing. All classes inclusive of materials. Classes run for 4 weeks starting first week of each month.

**CHILDREN'S ART CLASSES**  
Now available. Phone for details.

**Phone 4779 9928**  
For bookings or more information  
33 Rendle St, Aitkenvale  
(Above Pacific Plan Printing)  
Mon-Fri 9am - 5pm & Saturday 9am - 1pm  
[www.blueartshop.com](http://www.blueartshop.com)

Mention this ad  
and receive for students  
& all art societies  
**15 % Discount**  
\*Excludes Books

# Q150

BY ROSS SEARLE

Work is underway to curate a major Q150 Exhibition to be shown at Umbrella Studio in August 2009. The theme of the exhibition is 'Now and then: 150 years of art making in North Queensland' and it will feature 15 of Townsville's leading and emerging artists—Anneke Silver, James Brown, Anne Lord, Robert Preston, Jan Hynes, Ron Mc Burnie, Marion Gaemers, Aicey Zaro, Alison McDonald, Angela Hughes, RUN artist collective, Jenny Mulcahy, Gail Mabo, Gavin Ryan and Clive Hutchison. The exhibition gives particular recognition to Townsville's unique cultural history, with an emphasis on the history of art making in the region over the past 150 years.

While Q150 commemorates Queensland's separation from New South Wales in 1859, the anniversary gives us the opportunity to celebrate and reflect on the events that have shaped this particular region. The history of Queensland spans thousands of years, encompassing both a lengthy Indigenous presence in the state, as well as the eventful times of post-European settlement. North-eastern Queensland was explored by Dutch, Portuguese and French navigators before being encountered by Captain James Cook in 1770. This region has witnessed the tragic events of frontier warfare between European settlers and Indigenous inhabitants, as well as the employment of cheap Kanaka labour sourced from the South Pacific.

Each of the 15 Townsville artists will create a unique work of art in response to an art work created in north Queensland. The exhibition will provide a rare opportunity for artists to reflect on the creativity of other artists. There is a strong art collection base in Townsville with



the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery contributing a number of works for artists to study and to respond to. One of the challenges in curating this exhibition was to come up with a selection that would encompass the history and events that have shaped this region. The other test of my curatorial judgment was to select artists who would welcome the opportunity of responding to another artist's work. The broad thematic groupings of exploration/settlement, war/peace, natural environment/built environment and tourism/suburbia help to underpin the selection of 15 works created in the region.

The earliest work to be featured is an 1814 engraving after a painting by William Westall. The *Wreck Reef* drawing was made after the ship that Westall was travelling on crashed on the Great Barrier Reef around the 17 August 1803. Westall's drawings were 'wetted and partly destroyed' but were nevertheless forwarded to the Admiralty as part of the official record of the voyage. On Westall's return to London he received commissions from the Admiralty to paint nine pictures to illustrate Flinders' *A Voyage to Terra Australis*. It is interesting that this work, a hand-coloured steel engraving in the Collection of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, was first translated from a drawing to a painting and then published as an engraving ten years later. The Perc Tucker work is from a book that was published in 1814 and the plate was removed and hand-coloured by a collector or art dealer at a later stage.

Ron McBurnie's dual practice as a printmaker and painter, and his passion for pre-20th century printmaking, made for a logical connection between his practice and the Westall image. Ron relished the opportunity to respond to the richness of this image with its obvious





Gavin Ryan, *Over paid, over sexed and over here*, 2009, (original artwork by Lieutenant Frank Hodgkinson), Courtesy of Umbrella Studio

reference to the English romantic painting tradition. In Westall's image we see the little reef is enveloped by dark cloud, spotlighted, and we get the feeling that a storm has just passed.

Other works to be highlighted in this exhibition are Watt Mark Reid's sketch *The homestead at Woodstock*, 1863 (PTRG Collection), Arthur Streeton's oil painting on a wood panel *Magnetic Island*, 1924 (NGA Collection), Frank Hinder's watercolour *Dawn landing, Townsville*, c. 1943–44 (AWM Collection) and Donald Friend's oil painting *The schooner 'Miena' being refitted at Townsville*, 1954 (AGNSW Collection). There are also works created more recently by artists such as Judy Watson, Ian Smith, Tom Risley and Brett Adlington.

The idea of the exhibition is to allow artists to respond as freely as they would if they were entering into a collaboration with another artist. I have placed no real restrictions on how the artists respond and an example of this is Alison McDonald's sculptural interpretation of Douglas Annand's *Flying boat base at Horn Island, Torres Straits*, 1943 (AWM Collection). Alison has chosen to respond to visual elements in the Annand watercolour with its strange white floats and a red marker buoy—used for war service as markers anchored in the water

to guide the flying boats after they had landed. Alison will recreate these shapes as a large sculptural installation using her material of choice—discarded plastic drink bottles.

Bob Preston has chosen another World War II work by Frank Hinder, who was based in Townsville as a camouflage expert. The Sydney

Camouflage Group was formed in 1939 and was made up primarily of artists, photographers, architects, scientists, engineers and civil servants. Dakin was the chairman, and on 26 April 1940 the group included Sydney Ure Smith, John D. Moore, Frank Hinder, Douglas Annand, Robert Emerson Curtis, Russell Roberts, Max Dupain and Adrian Feint. They were a group of concerned citizens who worried about the slowness of Australia to develop strategies with camouflage. They were aware that in Britain film directors, artists, architects, commercial artists, picture restorers, sculptors and many others, including a magician, have been enlisted in a special corps of camouflage specialists'. During his leisure time in Townsville, Hinder worked on a series of Vorticist-inspired images of aircraft landing at Garbutt RAAF Base. Bob Preston has seen this as an opportunity to study Hinder's preoccupation in dynamic symmetry—the geometric and organic ordering of space—and he has created an image inspired by Frank Hinder's *Dawn landing, Townsville*, c. 1943–44 (AWM Collection).

**Q150 will be staged at Umbrella Studio**  
28 August – 4 October 2009. ❖





Downstairs at Umbrella Studio, Photographed by Jak Henson

## umbrella unfurls its past

BY BERNADETTE ASHLEY

**'Umbrella Studio Association has been a wonderful vehicle to expand our minds and enrich our lives in so many ways. Since its inception, Umbrella, and those involved with it, have brought entertainment, education, wisdom, challenge and an invigorating sense of social cohesion to the community,' asserts Townsville artist and writer Lynn Scott-Cummings.**

Given that Scott-Cummings has just completed the considerable task of ordering, archiving and creating a database of Umbrella's history, her assertion comes with all the weight of having intimately reviewed almost twenty-five years of documentation, exhibition ephemera, newsletters and photos. (Conceived as an artist-run collective in about

1986, Umbrella was incorporated in May 1989 and celebrates its 20th birthday, in the official sense, this year.)

Scott-Cummings has been a member of Umbrella since '222 Sturt Street', reflecting the tendency of people to remember exhibitions, events and phases by which venue Umbrella occupied at the time. (It has previously been housed in narrow galleries on the Victoria St pedestrian bridge over Ross Creek, and afterwards went to Northtown on Flinders Mall for a spell.)

This term of reference is quite handy to roughly date items, as she explains that early on, 'Occasionally...an invite [or catalogue] not only omitted the year, but no other documentation had been kept with it.'

A drawer full of uncaptioned and undated photographs and slides which accumulated during the archival project awaits recognition as well. 'It is hoped that, during a series of social events for the purpose, members



will be able to provide more information about both the photographs and the slides so that the database can be updated,' notes Scott-Cummings.

Alana Mandryk (administrator) recalls finding plastic bags full of documents and photos, some water-damaged, when she began working for Umbrella at 222 Sturt Street. To preserve them as best she could, Mandryk transferred the finds to document boxes, which she numbered and dated. Without the time or resources to address thorough preservation and archiving, 'She had valiantly worked to not only ensure the records didn't get lost, but to keep them in some sort of order as Umbrella scrambled from location to location to location,' says Scott-Cummings.

Umbrella director Vicki Salisbury, acknowledging '...there's a lot of power and strength in knowing the history of the organisation...', successfully attracted RADF funding for the archiving project. Scott-Cummings was approached, her long association with Umbrella complimenting her writer's attention to detail.

'I hadn't realised that in accepting the position I was condemning myself to what is jokingly referred to as "the dungeon" to serve a ten week sentence. The dungeon is the somewhat dark and gloomy storeroom that is under the office area of Umbrella,' explains Scott-Cummings. First priority was removing '...accumulated dust, cobwebs, and other detritus...' and creating a work station, before even beginning to tackle about fifty boxes of documentation.

Amongst the hoard of invitations, catalogues, slides, reports, financial statements, and exhibition proposals are some treasures which prompted Scott-Cummings to call Salisbury down into the dungeon to share. Salisbury '...lost a few hours reading old newsletters, seeing who

was involved...At one point it was like family, always there, supporting, eating, talking together. We'd like to bring some of it back—like the performance art of the early days.'

Reiterating the importance of knowing an organisation's history in order to move forward, Salisbury says, 'A lot of issues we've had continually since the eighties, they still remain: a feeling of isolation, funding being so Brisbane-centric, and so on. The time's come to capitalise on knowing our roots and our strength of identity as Queenslanders living in Townsville. Looking at our history of funding, venues, changes of directors ... helps good decisions for the direction of the organisation. We go back to our core purpose, it doesn't really change.'

Salisbury also sees potential for reviving some projects which didn't come to fruition, '...but may be worth another try, with our current resources.'

Some of the names which crop up repeatedly in the archives are still very familiar, people who've continued their artistic and academic careers, often locally, and who are still involved in some way with Umbrella. For renowned artists/writers Judy Watson and Kim Mahood, Umbrella was a training ground on the way to national recognition.

*Art Gaze* will delve further into the Umbrella archives in the next issue, revealing some half-forgotten treasures, and featuring interviews with early stalwarts of the organisation. ♦

# arts entertainment technology design media sports

*'servicing those who create'*

- copyright
- authors' rights
- trademarks
- registered designs
- patents
- royalties
- licensing



**BOULTON CLEARY & KERN LAWYERS**

Intellectual Property Lawyers



T (07) 4772 9200 F (07) 4772 9222 [bck.lawyers@bck.com.au](mailto:bck.lawyers@bck.com.au) [www.bck.com.au](http://www.bck.com.au)



Ron McBurnie, *Still searching for a Gallery, Fortitude Valley, 9pm Friday, 1989*, hard ground etching and aquatint, Purchased 1991, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Photographed by Michael Marzik

## metal as anything ron mcburnie

BY ERIC NASH

26 June until 16 August 2009  
PERC TUCKER REGIONAL GALLERY

**How does an exhibition 'sum up' an artist's thirty year career? It is an unenviable task in any case, but particularly so when the artist has been as prolific as local artist Ron McBurnie.**

*Metal as Anything* attempts to do just this by exploring the intricate etchings of the Townsville artist, and in the process celebrating both McBurnie's skill and his inherent humour. The artist frequently references historical artworks, and critiques our political landscape. Most striking, though, is the artist's ability to highlight the weird and wonderful events that occur in our 'mundane'

suburban environment. It is so easy for these fleeting, humorous moments to be lost, buried underneath the drudgery and commitments of our daily grind. McBurnie, unlike most, captures these moments in his own life and ensures they are not misplaced.

*This was Whistler's mother's cat's third attempt to jump onto the table of the Margaret Olley painting captures one such moment.* Certainly, to watch a cat jump into a painting would be cause for a chuckle, providing the viewer was not overly attached to the cat in question, or an over-zealous animal protection activist. To hear the story second-hand from a friend may produce a wry smirk, but it is unlikely to distract one from their daily routine. For McBurnie, it captures his overactive imagination, with the endless possibilities stemming from this event taking precedence in his mind and sparking him into action. 'I was interested in his account of this incident because I hadn't realised that cats had the ability to see two-dimensional images in three dimensions—now I wonder why our pets don't watch more TV.'

Throughout *A Rake's Progress* series, McBurnie's ability to reference historical artworks and skills as a social commentator are at their peak. The series of etchings, completed in both Brisbane and Townsville in 1989–90, reference eight paintings by William Hogarth, an 18th century English artist. Hogarth's series, completed in 1732–33, and later engraved and published, chronicle the plight of Tom Rakewell, the son and heir of a rich merchant who, after travelling to London, wastes all of his money on excesses such as prostitution and gambling. As a result, Rakewell is imprisoned, and ultimately finds himself in the psychiatric hospital Bedlam (Bethlem Royal Hospital).

McBurnie explains that, 'unlike Hogarth's narrative, the Rake in my series is a young artist who both observes and participates in events as they unfold in different environments. As well as recording many local events that occurred while I made the series, I included many historical art references that had in some way influenced my early artistic development.' One can only assume this series acts in some way as an



account (though, once again delightfully embellished with the artist's humour and irrepressible imagination) of McBurnie's own early quest to gain recognition as an artist.

In McBurnie's series, the Rake's only inheritance is a barbecue, and he has embarked on a quest to find a gallery to display his work, all the while witnessing the ruin of Brisbane's historic image and ultimately giving in to 'madness' during a surreal drive through Brisbane's suburbs. In this, I do begin to question whether the artist character is a legitimate Rake, a character who is most often described as a man 'habituated to immoral conduct', wasteful of an inherited fortune on women, gambling and drinking, and incurring many debts. In McBurnie's *A Rake's Progress* I have come to believe, though it may not be the artist's intention, that the real Rake is society. A society that the artist portrays, through very dark humour, as being more habituated to immoral conduct than is any individual.

A development in McBurnie's etchings in the early nineties was the inclusion of 'atmospheric effects like smoke or clouds'. This marked the greatest stylistic divergence in McBurnie's thirty years of etching, and was directly inspired by 19th century English landscape painter Samuel Palmer. In varying degrees, the romantic landscapes have also referenced William Blake, Hendrik Goudt, and author Kenneth Grahame.

The series of marks McBurnie uses in his romantic landscapes are distinctly different from those used in his suburban etchings, and have been developed and refined over the years. While *Burning the Leaves*, the artist's first experiment with atmospheric effects, was relatively small, his more recent romantic works have become increasingly grand. *The Story Teller*, which was completed earlier this year, is indicative of his confidence in the system of marks he now possesses. Interestingly, it also marks the most obvious coming-together of McBurnie's typically

suburban narrative with his romantic style. 'One of my close friends has a gift for retelling his life through remarkable stories. These stories are hypnotic and come to life through a kind of alchemy which slowly unfolds like watching wood ignite and glow on an open fire. After the fire has died away we remember with clarity the vision and warmth that it gave us.'

*Metal as Anything* follows the career of an artist with a gift for creating masterful etchings, through which he is able to examine the good and the bad in life—both with an equal dose of humour. Even after leaving the exhibition, viewers will remember with clarity his unique vision of the world, and the warmth he is able to provide by simply approaching life with a smile. ♦

## on the edge, visions of a tropical coastline

BY VICKI SALISBURY

Opening at Umbrella on 5 June 2009

***On The Edge: visions of a tropical coastline* is a group exhibition showcasing artworks from 12 exceptional artists who live and work in far north Queensland.**

**The group consists of five Torres Strait Islander artists, Dennis Nona, Alick Tipoti, Brian Robinson, Joey Laifoo and Ceferino Sabatino; it also features four Aboriginal artists, Arone Meeks, Rosella Namok, Elaine Lampton and Zane Sounders. There are two non-Indigenous artists, Ian Horn and Anna Englitis, as well as Sasi Victoire who is Malaysian.**

Each artist displays two or more works each and their diversity of arts practice is expressed in the eclectic mediums displayed, from recognised artists like Brian Robinson to emerging artist Ceferino Sabatino. Robinson has created a series of constructed wall pieces. *Outtrigger* is an inspired three-dimensional sculpture created from spray-painted wood and fomex plastic. Ceferino Sabatino's contribution to the exhibition

includes a selection of five works on canvas and *Dhoeir*, a Torres Strait Island head dress that he assembled from meticulously cut traditional white cockatoo feathers and string.

Significant philosophical and geographical synergies hold this seemingly disparate collaborative project together. Notions of identity, as a point of commonality, bind the exhibition's theme of individual artists expressing their reverence for this extraordinary north Queensland region. The artists involved are linked by their location, living on the edge of the unique tropical sea coast, in Cairns, Lockhart River and the islands of the Torres Strait.

*Torrents* by Kuku Midigi artist Arone Meeks, is one of three powerful triptych works, with each acrylic on canvas is 605 × 1830 mm each. Meek's painterly marks are applied in layers, building colour from a rich base of subtle texture. This is one of several works in the exhibition to use patterns of wavy lines to exemplify water as fundamental to the tropics. Within Meek's works is a musicality, centered on a customary knowledge that is homogenous within this group of artists.

This sense of the world is a feature that has inspired Lockhart River artist Rosella Namok's *Blue water swimming hole*, where marbled blues channels are scraped back to a watery thin layer of acrylic. Namok's paintings have been featured in some of the most prestigious national and international galleries, yet

remarkably, this is the first time she has participated in a local Cairns exhibition.

Telstra Award winning, Torres Strait artist Dennis Nona's delicate linocut *Pawa mosquito medicine* re-states the influence of water to sustain and regenerate the life force of the tropics. A turquoise wash engulfs a collection of gracefully layered creatures, transparent wings and nimble legged mosquitoes. Beads of water drip onto the paper and are forever captured within the work of embossed patterns and choreographed quick sketches of constant motion.

Joey Laifoo's linocut *Dugong family* acknowledges his respect for family and a strength of spirit achieved through his cultural identity. The sea and the dugong are a single, synergistic entity, existing one inside the other. Laifoo compassionately reveals the natural order of life in the Torres Strait, where the beginning of one cycle sustains the completion of another. Through his printmaking, Laifoo embeds a cultural cohesion of actions and beliefs.

*Piki*, Alick Tipoti's 670 × 350 mm black and white linoprint work, haunts the viewer with spirit figures disguised within the complexity of patterned cuts and trickster's lines—swooping out during the night, leaving a wake of energy in its path to steal the soul of the unsuspecting, on the edge of uncontrollable forces that impinge on a way of life. This work

has a symbolic efficacy that addresses both traditional and emergent forms of sociability and identity. In *Piki*, Tipoti illustrates that a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members.

*Confronting Exposure* 2008 is a major canvas from Kuranda artist Zane Saunders. Cool greys and layers of texture underlie colours of dripping ooze that swim across the canvas. Forms of curvaceous pastel orb shapes are evocative of Kandinsky's style of early modernist works. This series of new works from Saunders are, at first glance, subtle, yet perhaps are warnings of environmental changes he cognitively perceives, consumed by invisible forces that are massive and unrecognisable.

*Global Warming* is one of a series of five wooden wall pieces created by Elaine Lampton. Black and grey slate pieces are inlaid into geometric cities imbedded into the wood. Carved rivers meander, avoiding the dotted smudges of ground ochre to form an aerial map. The artist is warning us that, in this very movement, we are on the edge of catastrophic environmental changes. Lampton utilises her understanding of Birrigubba (Bunjlung material culture) wood, ochre and found objects to create a series of visual message shields of the inevitable.

Sasi Victoire presents a series of works that are political statements of living, not so much on the edge but outside the edge, looking in. *Legend in a Lunch Box* is a series of plastic lunch boxes with mixed media assemblage that playfully unpacks the idea of fitting in.

The work is a metaphor of belonging in a little space and the necessity of positioning oneself, as an artist, as multicultural, as migrant, as Indigenous, as whatever box is demanded of us at any particular time. The opportunities one has as an artist is based on ticking boxes. The narrative is relevant in a wide range of current political contexts that extend beyond individual arts practice to the hegemony of government policy and its effect on contemporary art in Australia.

Former TAFE teacher Ian Horn is an avid beach comer. His 2008 × 1680 × 750 mm acrylic on unprimed calico, *Tidal Eddy* conveys his admiration and respect for the unstoppable forces of nature that sculpt and reshape sand and water in a continuous cycle. Horn presents a dramatic triptych painting series in rich golds, warm ochres and opalescent blue.

In addition to place, interpersonal relationships within the group are another significant theme that weaves these artist's lives together. Each one has encouraged, supported and progressed arts practice in the region. However, it is through a deep commitment of over 20 years of teaching art that elevates the role of Anna Englitis from exhibition participant to Grand Dame. Her influence over the group, to initiate and maintain the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Arts Course at the Cairns Institute of TAFE, is the life blood of the group. Her work is imbued with a love of her students and intimate knowledge of their land, and her personal connection is passionately expressed through her own arts practice. A small anthropological display of shells and a map place the artist's passion to document prehistoric rock formations, Indigenous rock

art and the pristine coastline of the Denham Islands' region. Anna's *Sea Spirit* is a hand-coloured linocut, a self-portrait of a lovely woman whose graceful strands of hair undulate upward, melding into seagrasses that serve to protect and nurture life beneath the sea.

*On The Edge* is about the spirit of partnerships and collaboration and this is the essence that the group is striving for. All 12 artists express the spirit of cultural difference in the centrepiece work, *On the Edge visions of tropical coastline* 2008, a collaborative lino cut 3600 × 750 mm, printed by Editions Tremblay. Individual contributions are valued as each artist was invited to share an intimate geographical connection united together as Cape York.

Anna Englitis's influence on the education and training of artists living and working in north Queensland is reinforced in this particular work because it encapsulates the essential elements of the exhibition— location, relationships, collaboration and appreciation. This is an opportunity to promote the high level of technical skills and integrity of the explosion of good work bursting from established and emerging north Queensland contemporary artists, encouraging its continuance and acknowledging its place in the world.

Exhibition continues at Umbrella through to 12 July 2009. ❖

Ian Horn, *Tidal Eddy*, 2008, Acrylic on unprimed calico, Courtesy of Umbrella Studio





PINNACLES GALLERY  
PRESENTS

# crossings



Saturday 9 May to Sunday 14 June 2009

An exhibition featuring installation work by  
Vince Bray, Candace Miles, Alan Valentine,  
Trish Nixon-Smith and Marion Gaemers

Pinnacles Gallery  
Riverway Arts Centre  
20 Village Blvd  
Thuringowa Central

Mon & Tues Closed  
Wed & Thurs 11am - 5 pm  
Fri 11am - 7pm  
Sat & Sun 10am - 5pm

ph: 07 4773 8871  
fax: 07 4723 0280  
e: pinnacles@townsville.qld.gov.au



## Depth of Field

Pinnacles Gallery 2009 NAIDOC  
Celebration Exhibition  
20 June to 26 July



Pinnacles Gallery  
Riverway Arts Centre  
20 Village Blvd  
Thuringowa Central

Mon & Tues Closed  
Wed & Thurs 11am - 5 pm  
Fri 11am - 7pm  
Sat & Sun 10am - 5pm

ph: 07 4773 8871  
fax: 07 4723 0280  
e: pinnacles@townsville.qld.gov.au



**ADVERTISE WITH  
or sponsor  
ArtGaze Magazine**

0400 297 301  
jak@artgaze.com.au  
www.artgaze.com.au



# Umbrella Studio

## Tracks of the Past, Printing the Future

July 17 - 23 August

Exhibition of new works on paper from Indigenous Master Printmakers living and working in the region.

## Concert Series

Sunday 2 August 2pm

Magnetic Reflections & Suite Brolga compositions by Dr. David Salisbury.

Featuring William Barton (didgeridoo), Timothy Constable (tuned percussion), David Salisbury (saxophone) and Serenata Quartet. A free concert in partnership with the Australian Festival of Chamber Music.

## Now and Then: 150 years of Art Making in North Queensland

28 August - 4 October

15 artists have created unique works of art in response to an historical work of art created in the region.

Q-150 project – CEMEX, major sponsor

## Concert Series

Sunday 30 August 11:30 am

Coffee concert/Artist talk Townsville Guitar Orchestra performs works from North Queensland Composers.

A free concert in partnership with North Queensland Music Centre.

482 Flinders St, Townsville | 4772 7109

[www.umbrella.org.au](http://www.umbrella.org.au) | 9-5pm Mon - Fri & 9-1pm Sun

